

Feast Days

Germany “How-To” Guide, Intermediate Level: Instruction

October 2015

GOAL

This guide will teach you about the use of religious feast days in records and how to convert them into calendar dates.

INTRODUCTION

The liturgical calendar outlines the dates on which religious holidays, or “holy days”, were to be observed or celebrated. In record keeping, it is not uncommon for priests and pastors to record the date of an event using only the name of the feast day. Therefore, one must be able to recognize and know how to convert the feast days to full dates. You will also need to learn how to determine which calendar, Julian or Gregorian, was in use at the time the record was created.

HOW TO

Julian and Gregorian Calendars

Read the history of these calendars on the FamilySearch Wiki. You can use the following link:

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Julian_and_Gregorian_Calendars

The chart provided on the FamilySearch Wiki page above is not sufficient when undertaking German research. The chart tells us that the Holy Roman Empire (which included most of modern Germany) began switching to the Gregorian calendar in 1583. The wiki page at the link below, *Moveable Feast Day Calendar for: Germany*, explains that all of Protestant German switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1700. There is also a list of regions and the exact dates that the Catholics in those regions switched to the Gregorian calendar.

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Moveable_Feast_Day_Calendar_for:_Germany

Make sure you know which calendar is being used before you attempt to convert a feast day.

Feast Days

There are two types of feast days: fixed and movable. A fixed feast day was the same every year. For example, Christmas is on December 25 every year, regardless of the day of the week on which that date falls. A movable feast day will fall on a different day each year based on the date of Easter Sunday.

If a record gives a feast day instead of a calendar date, check first to see if the day shows up on

the movable feast day calendar. There is a very user-friendly movable feast day calendar on the FamilySearch Wiki, which can be accessed using the following link to the page you have already visited.

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Moveable_Feast_Day_Calendar_for_Germany

Read the information provided on the wiki page and familiarize yourself with the calendar links provided there.

You will notice that there is only one calendar for each year. In Germany, both the Julian and Gregorian calendars were used simultaneously based on religion and location. When you need a calendar not provided on the wiki page, you will need to use a supplementary source.

One such source is Inger Bukke, Peer Kristensen, and Finn Thomsen's *The Comprehensive Genealogical Feast Day Calendar*. You can access a digitized version of this book in the FamilySearch catalog by doing a title search for "comprehensive genealogical feast day calendar." Or you can use the following link: <https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/222913>

At the beginning of the book there is an alphabetical index to the feast days that provides the date for fixed days. This list will be helpful in situations when the name of the feast day is not listed on the movable calendars provided in the book and on the wiki.

Further information

For a more thorough treatment of calendar use in German areas of Europe, consult the German language book by H. Grotefend entitled, *Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung des Deutschen Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*. This book provides Julian and Gregorian calendars, and another alphabetical listing of feast days that includes many German forms of the feast day names. Grotefend's book has been digitized by Google. Use the following link:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=jzMNAAAAYAAJ>

PRACTICE

Go to the wiki page referenced above:

https://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Moveable_Feast_Day_Calendar_for_Germany

We are going to examine a few feast days and determine the Julian and Gregorian dates for each.

Trinitatis 1617

1. From the wiki page, choose the 1617 link under the subheading "Julian Calendars."
2. Find *Trinitatis* on the left side of the page.
3. The next column gives the **Julian** calendar date, which was **15 June**.
4. Click the "back" button on your browser to go back to the original wiki page.
5. Now find the 1617 link under the subheading "Gregorian Calendars." The link is not there because the 1617 Gregorian calendar is not on the wiki.
6. Go to FamilySearch.org
7. Point to "Search" at the top of the page, then click on "Catalog" in the drop-down list.
8. Under "Search by:" select "Titles."

9. Type “comprehensive genealogical feast day calendar” in the “Titles” search field and click the blue “Search” button.
10. Click on the only search result.
11. Under “Notes” on the catalog page, you should see red text that reads, “To view a digital version of this item click here.”
12. Click on the link to open the digital version of the book.
13. Go to page 75 of the book, which is image 79 in the viewer. You should see the 1617 Gregorian calendar on this page.
14. Find *Trinitatis*, which is number 34 on left side of the page.
15. The fourth date column from the left gives the 1617 **Gregorian** calendar date, which was **21 May**.

Sexagesima (Exurge) 1616

1. From the wiki page, choose the 1616 link under the subheading “Julian Calendars.”
2. Find *Sexagesima* on the left side of the page.
3. The next column gives the **Julian** calendar date, which was **4 February**.
4. Repeat steps 6-13 above. You should see the 1616 Gregorian calendar on this page.
5. Find *Sexagesima*, which is number 9 on the left side of the page.
6. The third date column from the left gives the 1616 **Gregorian** calendar date, which was **7 February**.

Pascha 1618

1. From the wiki page, choose the 1618 link under the subheading “Julian Calendars.”
2. Find *Pascha* on the left side of the page.
3. The next column gives the **Julian** calendar date, which was **5 April**.
4. Repeat steps 6-13 above. You should see the 1618 Gregorian calendar on this page.
5. Find *Pascha*, which is number 21 on the left side of the page.
6. The fifth date column from the left gives the 1618 **Gregorian** calendar date, which was **15 April**.

6 post Trinitatis (Pentecost 7) 1620

1. From the wiki page, choose the 1618 link under the subheading “Julian Calendars.”
2. Find *6 p. Trinitatis* on the left side of the page.
3. The next column gives the **Julian** calendar date, which was **12 July**.
4. Repeat steps 6-13 above. You should see the 1620 Gregorian calendar on this page.
5. Find *6 p. Trin. (Pent. 7)*, which is number 40 on the left side of the page.
6. The seventh date column from the left gives the 1620 **Gregorian** calendar date, which was **26 July**.

ACTIVITY

Now, test your skills you have learned in this “How to” Guide. The Activity is a way to check your knowledge and let you know you’ve mastered the Guide! [Click here](#) to try out the Activity.